

## Crime of the Century

THE LINDBERGH CASE

as told to William J. Slocum 1948

THREE TIMES a soft-voiced Treasury agent named Arthur P. Madden managed to get the floor during three smoky meetings where Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh sat surrounded by police officials from New Jersey and New York City and a coterie of private detectives and gangsters. Three times they all listened as Madden quietly told them where to find a piece of paper that would solve the crime of the century—the kidnaping and murder of Charles Augustus Lindbergh, Jr.

All the meetings were in New York City and in the thirty seconds it took Madden to outline his plan he found time to point out that the piece of paper lay only half an hour away. Each time Madden spoke his idea was greeted enthusiastically as sane, sound, and obviously worthy of immediate investigation. But it was so obvious, so simple, and everybody was so terribly busy that it was lost in the shuffle and as a result it took thirty months to catch Bruno Richard Hauptmann. It should have taken six weeks—eight at the most.

That was just one of the fantastic frustrations in the manhunt for Hauptmann. A manhunt that was filled with frustrations, sadistic humans, suicides, murders, spiritualists, hoodlums, and a weird assortment of odd creatures who wandered in and out like clowns in a funeral procession. Red herrings seemed to fall from the skies for two and a half years, and the long arm of coincidence swept from Hopewell, N. J., to such exotic places as Uzsok, Czechoslovakia, and the underworld of Calcutta.

Bruno Richard Hauptmann was the guiltiest man I ever knew, yet he would have committed the crime of the century without penalty

had not the highly publicized pipe-dreams of Scarface Al Capone forced us into a case in which we had no business. Perhaps in time the law would have caught up to most of our victims—Capone, Huey Long and his gang, Boss Pendergast, Waxie Gordon, and other illustrious murderers and thieves—but I am certain that Hauptmann would be a free man today had not Colonel Lindbergh succumbed to a stuffy ultimatum I was forced to give him.

We were in the case only because we had just succeeded in putting Capone in jail for eleven years and Al found the confinement so irksome that he told Arthur Brisbane, the Hearst columnist, that given his freedom he would have the infant restored to his parents. Brisbane relayed Al's offer to millions of readers in scarlet headlines and purple prose. The baby's father saw the story and, knowing the part the Treasury Department had played in putting Al where he was, Lindbergh called his good friend, Ogden L. Mills, Secretary of the Treasury, to discuss it with him and ask for help. Mills called me and ordered me to Hopewell immediately to offer Lindbergh the complete facilities of our Unit. The next day I met with Lindbergh and his close friend, Henry Breckinridge. Breckinridge has frequently been called Lindbergh's adviser; Lindbergh had no advisers.

The Hopewell home was like headquarters in the midst of a battlefield. Guards carefully screened all who entered; high-ranking police officials from New Jersey and New York City huddled in whispered conference; an occasional jailbird came and went as New York's underworld sent emissaries to ask what it could do; and in a room sat eight New Jersey State Troopers, each hunched over a barrel sorting mail. When these eight had worked eight hours they were succeeded by another crew, and so it went around the clock.

Through this turmoil walked Lindbergh—pleasant, stubborn, occasionally gay in an awkward effort to lift the tension, but always in full charge of operations and himself. Mrs. Lindbergh came and went when she was needed to answer a question or fetch a sandwich. I know of no way to describe her courage. Perhaps the baby she was

carrying under a frightened heart gave her strength beyond all human expectation. I don't know, but something did.

Lindbergh found time for a gracious phrase of gratitude for my appearance and then got down to business immediately with a sentence which few men could ever say. "Mr. Irey, I wouldn't ask for Capone's release if—even if it would save a life."

To meet Lindbergh is to know he has no time or desire for polite talk, so I told him very bluntly, "Capone doesn't know who has the child, Colonel Lindbergh. He is simply trying to get out of jail. We know he thinks—or says he thinks—one of his gang, Bob Conroy, did it. Conroy was at least two hundred miles away, maybe more. We intend, however, to get Conroy and talk to him. But he didn't do it."

I had brought along our Philadelphia Agent-in-Charge, Arthur Nichols. Lindbergh talked to us about the case, showing us the note that had been left on the window sill on the night of March 1, 1932. It read:

DEAR SIR:

Have 50,000\$ ready 25,000\$ in 20\$ bills 15,000\$ in 10\$ bills and 10,000\$ in 5\$ bills. After 2-4 days we will inform you where to deliver money.

We warn you from making anything public or for notify the police. The child is in good care.

Indication for are letters are signature.

The translation of this last peculiar sentence was: "Indication of the validity of letters from us is this signature." The signature was a curious device consisting of a pair of interlocking circles and three tiny holes.

Lindbergh showed us two more letters, obviously from the kidnaper. They assured him his baby was well, but complained about the publicity the case was getting and raised the ransom to \$70,000 on the grounds that the publicity had forced the kidnapers to take in another partner.

Lindbergh felt that there was a good chance of completing arrangements to get his baby back and was desperately anxious that no police or civilian interference bungle things. As an example of the latter, he showed us a note inserted in the *Bronx Home News* by Dr. John F. Condon, a seventy-two-year-old eccentric pedagogue, who was volunteering his services as go-between and adding \$1,000 of his own savings to the ransom.

When Nichols and I were leaving, Lindbergh said: "I'm at a complete loss, Mr. Irey. I have only policemen to turn to for help. I would like it very much if you folks could stay." I told him we would be delighted to do anything we could, but that we agreed that the situation called for a minimum of police interference. However, if we were needed, I was certain a phone call would bring us back.

The next day Dr. Condon got a letter from the kidnaper, accepting him as go-between. Condon, known as "Jafsie," immediately called a friendly butcher who drove him out to Hopewell. He talked with Lindbergh and it was decided to follow the kidnaper's instructions and insert an ad, "money is ready," in the *New York American*.

At seven o'clock on the evening of March 12, a taxi driver delivered a note to Condon in his Bronx home. The note read:

DR. CONDON:

We trust you, but we will note come in your haus it is to danger even you cane note know if police or secret service is watching you. Follow this instruction. Take a car and drive to the last subway station from Jerome ave line 100 feet from the last station on the left seide is a empty frank further stand with a big open porch around, you will find a notise in senter of the porch underneath a stone. This notise will tell you where to find us. Act accordingly.

After  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a houer be on the place, bring the money with you.

Jafsie secured the driving services of his bodyguard and fellow eccentric, Al Reich. Al was a prizefighter, distinguished more for his willingness than for his triumphs, and he was just one of a long suc-

cession of "characters" who wandered in and out of Lindbergh's tragic experience. Al drove Jafsie to the "frank further" stand and found a note:

Cross the street and follow the fence from the cemetery. Direction to 233 street. I will meet you.

Jafsie followed the fence that bounds New York City's huge Woodlawn Cemetery. At the corner of 233rd St. and Jerome Ave. a voice called, "Hey Doktor, Hey Doktor." The man identified himself as "John," and he and Jafsie talked for a while until a cemetery guard approached. John vaulted the fence and ran across the street with Jafsie waddling after him. Jafsie caught up to the man in Van Cortlandt Park and the two sat down on a bench. Condon asked for proof that the child was alive and John explained that there were five people in the kidnaping gang and outlined exactly how the \$70,000 ransom was to be divided. He said the baby was on a boat, a long distance from New York.

John and Jafsie talked for several minutes in the cemetery and for fully half an hour in Van Cortlandt Park, yet the completely unsatisfactory report of the interview is contained in the preceding paragraph. Jafsie did add that John was a Scandinavian and that he kept his face hidden throughout the interview.

John F. Condon was seventy-two years old and a retired New York City school teacher who continued teaching in parochial schools. He was at times a brilliant man, always an honest man, and often a cranky, cantankerous old curmudgeon. He had injected himself into the case and become the key man, a position in which he reveled. His lust for publicity was second only to his desire to get the baby back. He was a pest, make no mistake about that, yet he cannot be compared to the swine who injected themselves into the affair for glory or cash. To describe him best I must jump ahead of my story a bit and present the picture of Lindbergh piloting a plane looking for the boat upon which he hoped to find his son. Sitting next to Lindbergh

was Breckinridge, and behind them were Condon and me. We searched the bleak waters tensely. Nobody could speak because Jafsie was roaring in rolling accents:

*To be, or not to be: that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind, etc., etc.*

When he wasn't reciting from *Hamlet*, he was reeling off Biblical quotations by the hour. That was Jafsie, the only man the kidnaper would deal with.

After this meeting between Jafsie and John, Lindbergh asked that the Intelligence Unit be reassigned to the case. I brought Madden in from Chicago and assigned another Special Agent, Frank Wilson. The ubiquitous Pat O'Rourke joined our camp, which was set up in a quiet men's club in New York. The New York Agent-in-Charge, Hugh McQuillen, and his office worked on the case also.

We soon had work for O'Rourke's unique talents. Breckinridge was muttering about a pair of spiritualists, Peter Baritella and a lady known as Mary Magdalene. Baritella had lured Breckinridge into a meeting at Somerset, N. J., by promising good news. He did not disclose his affinity with the spirit world. When Breckinridge realized what black magic the pair practiced he immediately started to leave, but Baritella set a new record in trance inductions and Mary Magdalene began moaning, "Mr. Breckinridge, the spirits say the note was left on the window sill in the nursery." Breckinridge smiled at such foolishness and denied it, but he knew that was exactly where the note had been left and that it was a deep secret when the medium announced it.

"Mr. Breckinridge, you got a note at your own office today."

Breckinridge was truly relieved. No notes had ever been sent to his office. He told her that happily.

"All right, Mr. Breckinridge," she whispered, "be at your office tomorrow at nine in the morning."

"That's pretty early."

"Be there!"

Happy to be rid of the pair after the séance which was yet to take on any importance, Breckinridge asked if they had sufficient money to get home.

"Yes," answered Baritella, "*they* gave us round trip tickets to Trenton."

Nine in the morning was a little too early for Breckinridge, but his secretary called the next day to inform him that there was an authentic kidnap note in the morning mail.

With the arrival of the predicted note at Breckinridge's office, we became extremely anxious to find out who "*they*" were. We assigned O'Rourke to the job and he joined their spiritualistic church. He found nothing. Nor did Owney Madden, the New York gangster who guaranteed to find out all about them. The church was in a store at 164 E. 147 Street. When Hauptmann was caught and claimed he got the money from Isidore Fisch, the man who was then dead in Germany, we discovered that Fisch had lived across the street from Baritella. Fisch hadn't met Hauptmann until two years after the crime, so this is merely one of the coincidence-spawned red herrings we were always meeting.

Frank Bartow, of J. P. Morgan & Company, told Lindbergh that the Department of Labor was making certain investigations in connection with the case and that a Murray Garsson, Special Assistant Secretary of Labor, had been in contact with Bartow. (Garsson is the same Murray Garsson so recently jailed with Congressman Andrew J. May.) Garsson claimed he could solve the case in forty-eight hours, given an opportunity. Lindbergh, of course, was all for giving him the opportunity and at 1:00 A.M. Lindbergh phoned his wife at Hopewell and told her to arrange to admit Garsson, Bartow, and an associate of Garsson's.

At 3:00 A. M. Garsson arrived. Mrs. Lindbergh, her mother, Mrs. Morrow, and Mrs. Breckinridge had all dressed in anticipation of the visit. Garsson strode in, carrying a huge bag. The bag horrified Mrs.

Lindbergh, who was certain her baby was in it. Garsson loudly insisted that it was an inside job and to prove his point claimed that any intruder in the nursery upstairs could easily be heard downstairs where he was now talking with the nervous women. He ordered the pregnant Mrs. Lindbergh to run upstairs and walk about to prove his point. Dutifully she did, and when she returned to inquire if Garsson had heard her he said, "Oh, I was busy talking, I forgot to listen. Run up and do it again." Mrs. Morrow stopped that nonsense, but she couldn't stop what followed.

Garsson demanded that all the servants be aroused and he interviewed them. Betty Gow told him that Lindbergh had twice playfully hidden the child, and Garsson promptly informed the women that he (Lindbergh) had been rehearsing for the kidnaping. He capped the grisly evening by demanding that Mrs. Lindbergh take him downstairs to the cellar, where the horrified woman watched him first poke around in the furnace for her child's bones and then open up the cesspool and repeat the sickening process. At 7:00 A.M. he departed, leaving behind him three frantic women and several irate, but powerless, men who dared not throw him out in view of Colonel Lindbergh's instructions. Eventually the White House instructed the Department of Labor to withdraw Garsson, but not until he had made two more shattering visits. I am pleased to report that I eventually got Garsson fired.

It was about this same time that Gaston B. Means was engaged in persuading Mrs. Ned McLean, of Washington, D. C., to pawn the Hope Diamond for \$100,000, on the promise that he could get the Lindbergh baby back for that sum. Farther south, in Norfolk, Virginia, John Curtis was preparing to enter the case with his cruel lies that earned him a year in jail. Means can be understood, he was just a swindler; but Garsson and Curtis hadn't even that alibi.

The kidnaper informed Lindbergh via note that he should insert an advertisement in the *New York American* reading: "Money is ready." He would then contact Jafsie to arrange the pay-off.

The pay-off itself presented to Colonel Lindbergh a variety of problems. First, there was the matter of raising \$70,000 in cash. Mrs. Lindbergh's wealthy parents promptly offered him the money, but Lindbergh refused it. Instead he sold stocks that had cost him \$350,000 for \$70,000, which was all they would bring in March of 1932. In our conferences he admitted frankly that the kidnaper had him over a barrel, but he hoped somehow he could arrange for some proof that he was not being hoaxed and that it might be arranged that he get the child in immediate exchange for the money. But that was all wishful thinking, he admitted. When the terms of exchange were laid down, he must meet them and hope for the best. In all our talks Lindbergh somehow made us realize that he well understood what we all thought but never mentioned.

Jafsie was talking too much, and in no time his Bronx home was surrounded by reporters, an obvious handicap, because the kidnaper had sent one message by hand and might want to send another. The old man was trailed wherever he went and he loved it. Once he nearly started a riot by calmly rowing in the Long Island Sound. Reporters and hundreds of Bronxites watched him or followed him in boats, sure that he was about to find the baby.

The reporters around the Jafsie home presented such a problem that we asked the newspapers to withdraw them. They all did, except the *Daily News*, which refused. Naturally the other papers returned. We met at Bartow's home late one evening to discuss the problem of reporters and photographers. Madden, Wilson, McQuillen, and I were the Intelligence Unit representatives, and Lindbergh was accompanied by Breckinridge, Harry Davison—like Bartow, a Morgan partner—and William Galvin, a friend of the Lindbergh group. We were frantic to rid Jafsie of the reporters and Madden asked Bartow if he knew Melvin Traylor, President of the First National Bank of Chicago. Bartow knew him, so Madden explained that Traylor knew Robert R. McCormick, owner of the *Chicago Tribune* and a member of the family that controlled the *Daily News*.

It was 2:00 A.M., but Bartow called Traylor, Traylor called McCormick at Aiken, S. C., McCormick called his cousin, Joseph Patterson, publisher of the *Daily News* in New York, and in about an hour Jafsie's home was free of reporters.

Condon got his note the next day. The note complained of spending three dollars to buy another sleeping garment for the baby, but said the child's garment would be sent as proof that the baby was in the kidnaper's possession. (It was sent.) Then the cruel monster said that Condon should tell Mrs. Lindbergh her child was well, but that it had been necessary to increase his diet. The note ended with instructions to insert the following ad in the *American*: "I accept, mony is redy."

The money had been stored in a Bronx bank as soon as Condon had been established as the intermediary. Lindbergh and his wife had gone on the radio to promise immunity to the kidnaper if the boy was returned. They assured the kidnaper that he would get no marked bills. That promise brought up a serious crisis as the time to pay the ransom came obviously nearer. I told Lindbergh that every single bill should be listed and a record kept of the serial numbers. Lindbergh argued stubbornly against it; he did not want to break his promise (*sic*). It seemed extraordinary ethics to all of us.

It was no time for a stuffy speech to a distraught man, but I had to make one. "Colonel Lindbergh, unless you comply with our suggestion to record the serial numbers, we shall have to withdraw from the case. We cannot compound a felony." Lindbergh pursed his lips and said nothing, and as far as we were concerned we were out of the case.

The next day Madden got a phone call. It was from Galvin. Galvin said he was speaking for Breckinridge and if Madden went to the J. P. Morgan & Company office a new set of ransom money would be drawn up as we wanted it arranged. Madden and Wilson immediately went downtown.

Madden and Wilson suggested that as much as possible of the

money be in gold certificates because they were easy to recognize. Twenty thousand dollars of it should be in gold-certificate fifty-dollar bills, which are spectacularly eye-catching. The bills should be bound with special string and paper that might easily be identified with portions of string and paper that we would keep. A dozen different kinds of wood went into making the box to hold the money. Samples of each kind of wood were carefully kept. Then fourteen clerks worked eight hours compiling a list of 5,150 items of currency which had no two numbers in sequence. The package was returned to the Bronx bank to await developments.

It was the listing of serial numbers of the bills that resulted in Hauptmann's capture. It was the same listing, plus the carefully saved pieces of wood, string, and paper that resulted in his conviction. A hundred thousand copies of the serial numbers of the 5,150 bills were immediately printed secretly. When the ransom was paid, Wilson took over the heartbreaking task of getting banks to force their tellers to pay some attention to the lists. Incidentally, Hauptmann was the first kidnaper ever to be apprehended by recovering the money he spent. Others had been convicted by being caught with marked money in their possession. In this case we never succeeded in finding out who was our prey until we could identify him through a bill he had passed.

On March 29, Lindbergh received a note threatening to raise the ransom to \$100,000 unless the kidnaper was paid before April 8. However, the note gave us no clue as to how the exchange could be effected. On April 1, a month after the child was taken, came the note we were waiting for.

The note arrived on a Friday and it said the money should be ready by Saturday evening and in Condon's possession. The ad was to read: "Yes, everything O.K." and was to be immediately placed in the *American* so it would appear Saturday morning. The ad was inserted, and at 7:00 P.M. Saturday evening a boy handed Jafsie the following note:

DEAR SIR:

Take a car and follow Tremont Ave. to the east until you reach the number 3225 east Tremont Ave.

It is a nursery

Bergen

Greenhouses florist

There is a table standing outside right on the door you find a letter underneath the table covert with stone, read and follow instruction. Don't speak to anyone on the way. If there is a radio alarm for police car, we warn you we have the same equipment. have the money in one bundle.

We give you  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a houer to reach the place.

Lindbergh decided to accompany Condon, and they drove immediately to 3225 East Tremont Avenue, which was Bergen's Florist Shop. Another note was under the table, with a stone holding it to the ground. It read:

Cross the street and walk to the next corner and follow Whittemore Ave. to the soud. Take the money with you. Come alone and walk I will meet you.

Lindbergh remained in the automobile as Jafsie followed instructions. Jafsie was met by the same man he had talked with at Woodlawn Cemetery and at Van Cortlandt Park. The man had again chosen a cemetery for his business, this time St. Raymond's. Jafsie had left the money in the car and after a brief talk with "John" he returned and got the package which he handed to John over a hedge fence. John handed back a note which Jafsie had demanded before getting the money. It read:

The boy is on boad Nelly it is a small boad 28 feet long, two persons on boad. They are innocense. you will find the boad between Horseneck Beach and Gay Head near Elizabeth Island.

Lindbergh and Condon drove immediately to Mrs. Morrow's apartment on East 72nd Street, where we were all gathered. First we looked over the note and then Jafsie spoke. Jafsie was always speak-

ing, so I must admit we weren't paying too much attention to him. He got the floor eventually with:

"Well, I talked him out of \$20,000." He was displaying a roll of bills. Madden, Wilson, and I all screamed together, "What?"

"Yes, sir. I saved \$20,000. Look." He held out before our horrified

As soon as it was light enough to see, we took off. Lindbergh and Breckinridge sat in the front, Jafsie and I behind them. The take-off was perfect, Lindbergh's hands and nerves were obviously under full control. After we had sufficient altitude, Breckinridge asked to take over the controls. He, too, was a flyer and this seemed an opportunity

expert, examined the ransom notes. "Every note \* was written by the man who wrote the note that was left in the baby's room," he told me. "The writer is undoubtedly a German, he has long thin hands, and he is methodical in the best German manner. He is illiterate, as his hand and spelling show, yet one thing puzzles me. His choice of words and his phrasing indicate a superior mentality. His spelling and his penmanship do not."

"Somebody dictating to him?" I asked.

Dr. Souder nodded and shrugged. "Could be." Another red herring.

On May 11 Colonel Lindbergh was at sea, running down information furnished by a Norfolk, Va., shipbuilder, John Curtis. Curtis professed to have been in radio contact with mysterious Swedes on mysterious ships. Another radio message brought the Colonel home. His son had been found dead, five miles from the Hopewell home. The home could be seen from the spot where the child's remains were discovered. In fact, a man with binoculars could have seen what was going on in the nursery from the spot where the infant was found.

Curtis was confessing his cruel hoax in the Lindberghs' living room when the Colonel returned home after identifying his son.

In the summer of 1932 two more red herrings came flopping onto the scene. Violet Sharpe, an employee in the Lindbergh home, committed suicide as Frank Wilson was waiting downstairs at Hopewell to question her about her movements on the night the baby was kidnaped. Her story of having a few beers with a man named "Earnie" hadn't checked, because the Earnie she identified proved he and some friends and his wife were nowhere in the vicinity. We knew she was shielding another Earnie and we knew she *had* had the beers she spoke of in company with this other Earnie and two of his friends. We further knew she hadn't kidnaped the child or had anything to do with it, but we wanted to know why she had lied to us.

\* Because of their somewhat repetitious nature the longer, verbose kidnap notes are omitted. In all, there were thirteen separate notes.

We still know she was innocent, but we never could find out why she took her own life.

In August our Chicago grapevine started humming again. "Bob Conroy and his girl friend are in New York—dead." It was Conroy whom Capone had suspected of kidnaping the child. Fingerprints taken of a man and woman found dead together in a cheap New York apartment proved to be those of Conroy and his known girl friend. The police called it a suicide pact. It did look as though the Capone hoodlum had killed his girl and then turned the gun on himself. Or somebody had done a skillful job of making it look that way. In any event the suicide had not been brought on by poverty, for found in the room was a neat little printing press and plates that turned out embarrassingly good counterfeit money.

Madden returned to his duties in Chicago, but Wilson remained on the case. He begged, threatened, and harangued bankers in an effort to get them to force clerks to keep their eyes open for ransom notes. The notes were appearing but they were being skillfully spread about and every time one did appear the newspapers carried the story. Only once did the kidnaper leave two in the same place, a Childs' Restaurant in Manhattan. The map of New York City showed a hundred or so pins indicating places where the money had been passed and the map also showed an extremely intriguing blank circle in the Bronx. Rewards were posted for clerks finding bills; some of the money came from the state of New Jersey. Lindbergh, himself, wrote out a check for more. Circulars were distributed in seven languages and all over the world.

In August of 1932 Wilson sat down with W. O. Woods, Treasurer of the United States, to plead that the Treasury secretly call in and retire certain groups of five-, ten-, and twenty-dollar bills. Included in the groups recommended by Wilson were the ransom bills. Woods was agreeable, but higher Treasury officials were forced to refuse, explaining that the United States' financial situation was so precarious at the time that if such a move leaked out it might easily start a panic.

On April 1 of the following year Franklin D. Roosevelt solved our problem, perforce, and set May 1, 1933 as the deadline for the recall of all gold certificates.

I doubt if Frank Wilson slept from April 1 to May 1, 1933. He sent out wires to banks, phoned them, visited them, had more circulars printed. Out of it developed the biggest red herring of them all and another suicide—and enough coincidences to set a Sherlock Holmes on his ear.

First of all, despite our pleas for extra vigilance, the kidnaper succeeded in exchanging \$15,000 in gold certificates in the few days before May 1. (Brokerage account records of Hauptmann were to show he invested approximately \$15,000 around May 1, 1933.) A bank in New York changed \$2,980 in gold certificates on May 1, and a rule of that bank required an exchange slip be made out for such transactions. The day after the transaction the bank reported that the \$2,980 was ransom money and the slip bore the name of J. J. Faulkner, 547 West 149th Street, Manhattan.

The teller didn't remember the transaction—there had been hundreds like it that day—and there was no J. J. Faulkner living at the address given nor did anybody remember any person of that name. We already knew that an automobile stolen a few days before the kidnaping from Lakehurst, N. J., had been found across from 547 West 149th Street shortly after the baby was taken. Lakehurst is not far from Hopewell.

The agents discovered in old New York City directories that a Jane Faulkner had lived at 547 W. 149th Street but had disappeared in 1920. We searched marriage records all over New York and discovered that a Jane Faulkner had married Carl O. Giessler, a naturalized German, in 1920. Giessler had filled out the marriage forms and our handwriting experts said that Giessler's writing on the marriage certificate seemed the same as the writing on the deposit slip, except there were not enough words on the deposit slip to justify any such statement in court.

We started looking for Giessler and had no trouble finding him. He was a partner in one of New York's biggest and most prosperous florist establishments. Giessler had a daughter by a previous marriage who was married to Henry C. Liepold, who was born in Germany. Mrs. Liepold, we were amazed to find, had that very day booked train passage to Canada under an assumed name. As we were preparing to follow her, another agent informed us that her husband had lived for three years at 3000 Decatur Avenue, the Bronx. "Jafsie" Condon lived at 2974 Decatur Avenue, less than a block away!

Mrs. Liepold was trailed to Montreal, her baggage exhaustively searched at the border, with the explanation that such searches were normal, and she was followed for a week before being trailed back home. She spent that week very quietly with an old girlhood chum. Giessler was interviewed, gave a completely satisfactory account of himself, including a denial that he had exchanged the money. He wrote five pages for sample handwriting and the experts agreed that it was not he who had signed "J. J. Faulkner." His son-in-law, Liepold, shot himself dead! I don't know why.

Jafsie had steadfastly denied that any resemblance could be seen to the ransom receiver in any of the hundreds of pictures we showed him, but one day he peered at one and said, "You're getting awfully hot, boys. I want to see that man." That man was Waslov Simek, who had been convicted for threatening to kidnap the Edsel Ford baby in Detroit. He was deported to Czechoslovakia. We started tracing him around the world. He had been tossed out of Czechoslovakia for arson. He went to Russia next, was chased out, and went to India. India got too hot and he went on to South America. Then closer to America—Santo Domingo. He was in Santo Domingo a year before the kidnaping, but alas, he had turned honest and was working for a company which required he sign certain records daily and his signatures proved he was in Santo Domingo the day of the kidnaping. Herrings.

The American Consul at Budapest sent an urgent message—was

the body of the baby that had been found beyond any doubt the body of the Lindbergh child? If not, perhaps we should look into the claims of the Hungarian police who insisted the baby was alive and hidden in the town of Uzsok, once in Hungary, but now a part of Czechoslovakia. That was one tip that was too easy to brush off.

On September 12, 1934 a man bought some gasoline at 127th Street and Lexington Avenue, in New York's Harlem. He gave the attendant a ten-dollar bill, and following the general custom of the trade the attendant jotted the license number of the car on the bill in case it should turn out to be counterfeit. When the bill cleared through a bank, an alert teller promptly recognized it as a ransom bill.

The police were informed. There was no reason to be sure that the man who passed the bill was the kidnaper. Several such leads had proven worthless. However the police checked the automobile license number against the application for that license. They had a photostat of the window-sill ransom note with them. They needed only one quick look at the writing on the license application and the writing on their photostat. This was their man—Bruno Richard Hauptmann, 1279 East 222nd Street, the Bronx.

This was thirty months and twelve days after the baby was stolen. It was more than twenty-eight months after Art Madden had said: "The kidnaper has passed money in the Bronx and nearby Manhattan. He mailed many of his notes from the Bronx. He was seen twice in the Bronx. The New York Traffic License Bureau keeps its Bronx registrations in the Bronx County Courthouse, separate from all other boroughs. Couldn't we get a half-dozen bright young ladies to go through the Bronx licenses to check the ransom writing against the applications for licenses? The notes are written in so unusual a hand it should present no great problem to recognize similar handwriting."

Three times Madden had offered that suggestion. Three times it had been greeted with unanimous approval. Three times it was forgotten. Now it was recalled in a flurry of scarlet necks. When Mad-

den had put it forward, we of the Treasury had neither the power nor the facilities to make the check. It was a job for the police. After the third attempt Madden had dropped the matter, sure that his idea was being politely turned down for lack of merit. That's why I say the case could have been solved in six weeks—eight at the most!

For seven days Hauptmann was followed every single second, around the clock. His bank account was investigated, his stock-market transactions were checked, and in a week his life was an open book from the day he had set foot on these shores. We knew also that he had left a criminal record behind in Germany. It was no red herring this time, but we wanted to find if there were any accomplices. In that week we neither saw nor heard him do anything that indicated he had any allies. Nothing indicated accomplices, so on September 9, 1934, he was arrested.

Hauptmann was arrested in his home and he sullenly denied knowing anything about the kidnaping or the origin of the ransom bill he had passed for gasoline. As he talked, he kept nervously glancing through a window in the direction of his garage. That sent the police into the garage immediately and they returned bearing a box. It was the same box we had carefully constructed in 1932 and in it was \$14,600.00 in bills whose serial numbers checked with the list we had compiled at J. P. Morgan's before the ransom was paid.

Hauptmann was convicted and executed on circumstantial evidence, not the most popular type of evidence in murder trials. But were it not for circumstantial evidence a man would have been exonerated completely although:

1. He passed ransom money and had \$14,600.00 of it when he was caught.
2. He kept neat records of his savings and expenses, which one of our mathematical wizards, Agent William E. Frank, used to prove that Hauptmann had spent or owned \$49,950.44 more than he ever earned since coming to America. Like a magician doing the same trick two ways, Frank then proved that since the ransom was paid

Hauptmann hadn't done an hour's work, yet he handled \$49,986.00 in bank and brokerage accounts less that \$14,600.00 he had in cash in the box. In other words, Frank came within \$49.56 of the \$50,000.00 ransom sum by one method and within \$14.00 by another.

3. Arthur Kohler, wood technician from the Bureau of Forestry, proved beyond doubt that the part of the wood used to make the kidnap ladder had been cut from a larger piece of wood that was found in Hauptmann's attic.

4. An engineer employed by the firm that had made the nails found in the ladder testified that they were identical to those found in a half-empty keg in the attic in the Bronx. He explained that the dies used to stamp out nails are changed daily and the nails in the ladder and in Hauptmann's home were made the same day at his factory.

5. Hauptmann insisted he had gotten the money from Isidore Fisch, his deceased business associate. The State proved that he had been spending the money two years before he met Fisch.

6. The ransom-note handwriting checked perfectly with samples of Hauptmann's penmanship.

7. Hauptmann owned a set of chisels with unusually fancy handles. One of these chisels was missing, a  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch tool. A  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch chisel of identical gaudy design was found beside the kidnap ladder at Hopewell.

8. Plane marks on the kidnap ladder were proved to have been made by a plane found in Hauptmann's possession.

9. A board was missing from the floor of Hauptmann's attic. A piece of the kidnap ladder fitted neatly into the empty space in the floor. Nail marks on this piece of the ladder fell exactly atop nail holes in the beam supporting the floor.

So much for circumstantial evidence. The opposite of circumstantial evidence is eyewitness testimony. The only eyewitness was Amandus Hochmuth, a tottering old war veteran, and the war was the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Hochmuth, despite his 87 years,

testified he remembered seeing Hauptmann drive through Hopewell the day the baby was stolen!

Charles P. Walton, Sr., Chairman of the jury, found it necessary at one time to take a punch at a persistent cameraman who insisted on knowing what had gone on in the jury room. So intense was the interest that Walton finally issued a statement:

Finally, after three and a half million words, here is how we convicted Hauptmann:

A ransom note had been left on the window sill of the stolen baby's bedroom. The person or persons who left that note got the baby. How they entered the room and left by ladder, stairs, or balloon, made no difference—he, or they, got the baby.

The person or persons who got the baby got the sleeping garment.

Some person, a man, gave Dr. J. F. Condon (Jafsie), the sleeping garment in exchange for \$50,000.

That money was recorded by bill numbers and all the bills were recorded.

Hauptmann was caught with \$14,000 of those bills. (Note: Walton was \$600 off.)

A million and a half words did not bury those simple facts. Every circumstance brought out made them clearer.

As I said in the starting, we twelve did only what you millions of readers would have done. We have no regrets. We only wish the whole tragedy had never been.

Colonel Lindbergh's comment was as positive. He made it to me at the trial and I pass it on as a tribute to the Treasury Department's Intelligence Unit which saved the Lindbergh tragedy from being more of a national disgrace than it is. Lindbergh said: "If it had not been for you fellows being in the case, Hauptmann would not now be on trial and your organization deserves the full credit for his apprehension."